

EARN REWARDS FASTER THAN EVER

LAQUINTA RETURNS™

LEARN MORE

CLICK HERE FOR CONTEST INFORMATION



TRAFFIC
[Live cameras](#)
[Traffic map](#)
[Construction](#)

Boise, ID
 High 69 | Low 39
 Currently: 63°

Thu 71 | Fri 72 | Sat 47 67 | 42



SUBSCRIBE TODAY
 Idaho Statesman
 Subscriber services
[eStatesman](#)

HOME NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS POLITICS OPINION ENTERTAINMENT LIFESTYLES OUTDOORS SPECIAL CONTENT CLASSIFIEDS SHOPPING

SEARCH: Web Search powered by **YAHOO! SEARCH**

QUICK LINKS: [Obituaries](#) [Varsity Extra](#) [Boise State football](#) [Find a job](#) [Cars](#) [Ask Coach Pete](#) [Voter Guide](#)

Entertainment > Arts and Culture

Boise's largest privately funded public art piece now shines Downtown

BY DANA OLAND - doland@idahostatesman.com
 Copyright: © 2010 Idaho Statesman
 Published: 09/18/10

0 Comments



Artist Ray King surveyed the expanse of the Boise Plaza entry. Tape measure and drill in hand, he spent the better part of Tuesday boring holes into the granite stone surface of the outdoor plaza.

With tools such as diamond bit drills, thousands of dichroic glass cubes, wrenches and a hydraulic lift, King makes art in the real - and concrete - world.

But King is sculpting with something less solid and tangible: the elusive phenomenon of light.

"People think I work with glass, and I do, but really my medium is light," the Philadelphia-based artist says.

King's piece, "Aqua," adds a boldly contemporary element to the city's landscape and raises the bar for public art in Boise, says the city's public art manager, Karen Bubb.

"That's something we don't often have the opportunity to do in the public sector, where art is developed through a more democratic process," Bubb says. "It's a piece of significant scale. It's highly technical and abstract and unlike anything else that can be seen in this state."

When Rafanelli & Nahas bought the Boise Plaza, formerly the Boise Cascade building, and several surrounding blocks four years ago, they knew they eventually would install a landmark piece of art, says Scott Schoenherr, development director for Rafanelli & Nahas and a partner in the Boise Plaza project.

"The building seemed like it was crying out for a piece of art," Schoenherr says. "Public art helps you create a place. Place-making might be an overused term, but we really wanted something with synergy that makes this a place people want to be."

The Boise Plaza is an important building in an architectural sense. It was built in 1971 and is the only building in Idaho designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the international megafirm that built the Hancock and Willis (formerly Sears) towers in Chicago.



Chris Butler
 Philadelphia artist Ray King installs his piece Friday afternoon at the Boise Plaza in Downtown Boise. The work is made of thousands of glass cubes hanging on cables.

[See All Photo Galleries](#)

ELSEWHERE

See other works by Ray King

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC COMMENT

About 25 people attended a talk at the Boise Plaza about "Aqua" with artist Ray King on Thursday. Here's some of what the public had to say:

© Boise artist Marcus Pierce: "I think it's really impressive, high-caliber work. It sets a precedent for what public art can be. ... It's difficult to balance creating something so beautiful with all the technical aspects."

CLICK FOR LOCAL DEALS & ADVERTISING SPECIALS

Idaho Statesman Top Jobs >>

[Mental Health Clinician](#)

Options

[US-OR-Grants Pass](#)

[Procurement Manager](#)

Glanbia Foods

US-ID-Boise

[Night Maintenance Assistant](#)

Glanbia Foods

US-ID-Boise

[Technical Support Supervisor](#)

Idaho Digital Learning

US-ID-Boise

Maintenance Engineer

>> [See More Top Jobs](#)

Find a Job

[careerbuilder.com](#)

Keywords:

e.g., registered nurse

Location:

City, State or Zip



[How to find your personal financial bailout](#)

So they were careful in how they selected this work, Schoenherr says. They hired an art consultant to identify national artists doing large-scale public art. They originally received applications from about 20. King was one of seven who traveled to Boise and were paid for proposals.

"AquA" is an ode to water, a precious commodity in Idaho and the West and a metaphor for health, King says.

It hangs 9 feet over the front entrance on the plaza's stage-like Bannock Street-side entry. Stainless steel cables 32 feet long hold more than 2,000 dichroic glass cubes.

One side of each cube is coated with dichroic film, a space-age product developed by NASA while it experimented with protective visors for astronauts.

Dichroic means "two-color." The glass reflects one color but projects its complement. So, when you look up at "AquA," it will reflect blues; then when the sun or other light source hits it, it will project an amber gold.

(Albeit softer hues, the colors echo Boise State's blue and orange.)

The cubes hang in a shape that is 17 feet wide and 13 feet, 6 inches tall. From a distance, it will appear to hover, like a water droplet ready to fall.

"A lot of my pieces are really water metaphors, like a waterfall without water," King says. "It has the same kind of attraction for the eye. With this coated glass, it's like looking out on the surface of a lake shimmering with light."

King started his career working in stained glass and became an influential artist in the crafts movement in the 1970s. But he grew bored with the medium, he says.

"I realized I didn't have to think about it any more. I could just drive. That was my exit point," he says.

Then he discovered the element that comes through glass was more interesting. He began charting the sun and building windows that reflected differently at different times of year, depending on the sun's position.

King works on an international scale and has created works in Washington, D.C.; Boston; New York City; Taipei, Taiwan; Erbusco, Italy; Denver; and Salt Lake City.

King's budgets usually run from \$100,000 to \$12 million (as for a piece he is currently working on in Taipei). Boise's is a medium-sized project. Because it is privately funded, the total budget was not available.

Dana Oland: 377-6442

© Deniz Erkenn of Boise: "I like the idea it works with light. It's a good combination of technology and nature."

© Thomas Zabala, owner of ZGA Architects in Boise: "It's nice to see an owner of a significant building commit to something like this, not just for their own purposes, but to add another visual display to the city. It shows a commitment to Boise and it extends the variety of art that public people are exposed to here."

Similar stories:

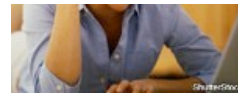
October's First Thursday in Downtown Boise offers a lot

First Thursday gallery stroll: 30 artists create murals in a Downtown Boise parking garage

Boise's transit center plan still stirring debate

Boise's First Thursday: Wanxin Zhang will give voice to his silent warriors at the Boise Art Museum

Gaia Gallery opens for First Friday



[View your credit report and scores](#)



[Salary boost with a master's degree?](#)

OPTIONS: [Most Read Stories](#) | [Story Comments](#) | [Email Story](#) | [Print story](#)

[Hide all comments](#)

Story Comments

We welcome comments but ask that you remain on topic. Some comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. Comments that are profane, personal attacks or otherwise inappropriate or are off topic are subject to removal. Repeat offenders will be blocked. Do not flag comments merely because you disagree with the comment.

[more about comments here.](#)

Add New Comment

Required: Please login below to comment.

Idaho Statesman